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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 000017

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV CU EI

SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY DOBRIANSKY'S VISIT TO IRELAND.

Classified By: DCM Robert J. Faucher. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) On January 7, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs and Special Envoy to Northern Ireland Paula Dobriansky met with President Mary McAleese, Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Brian Cowen, and Foreign Minister Micheal Martin to discuss the Northern Ireland peace process. The Irish officials made a strong pitch to maintain the Special Envoy position in the Obama administration and offered to assist U.S.-initiated international conflict resolution initiatives. Dobriansky appealed to the Foreign Minister to focus on human rights issues and meet with civil society during his upcoming visit to Cuba. End summary.

Meeting with President McAleese

¶2. (C) President Mary McAleese thanked Dobriansky for her efforts in moving the Northern Ireland peace process forward over the last two years. She urged that the special envoy position be maintained in the Obama administration, saying that there is still much work to be done, and that the involvement of the U.S. remains crucial. (Dobriansky responded to this repeated request throughout her meetings by saying that she had expressed her strong recommendation to the transition team that the Special Envoy position be retained.) With an obvious sense of relief, McAleese noted that the agreement on the devolution of policing and justice allowed for all the building blocks to fall into place, and stated definitively that the peace process cannot now be reversed. She pointed out that the British and Irish governments made a conscious policy decision not to intervene on this issue, preferring to test the durability of the peace process by letting the Northern Ireland authorities work it out among themselves. McAleese agreed with Dobriansky's suggestion that those involved in negotiating the peace in Northern Ireland could play a useful role to play in facilitating peace talks in conflicts in other parts of the world. Finally, she passed on her congratulations to President Bush and wished him well in the future.

Meeting with Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Brian Cowen

¶3. (C) Taoiseach Brian Cowen also thanked Dobriansky for her "invaluable" support, which, he said, kept the political parties in Northern Ireland focused on issues of governance rather than issues of grievance. He welcomed Dobriansky's intention to remain involved in Irish affairs -- in particular in promoting business investment and supporting community reconciliation efforts -- and offered Irish government assistance in such initiatives. He expressed his interest in Irish participation in future U.S.-sponsored international conflict resolution programs, such as those that might emerge from President Bush's proposed "Freedom Institute." He echoed President McAleese in urging the USG

to maintain the position of Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, saying that such a role "personalized" the critical American presence in the peace process and "added to the probability of its continued success."

Lunch with Foreign Minister Micheal Martin

¶4. (C) Similar themes emerged during Dobriansky's lunch with Foreign Minister Martin, which included Director General of the Anglo-Irish Division Pat Hennessy, and Political Director Rory Montgomery. They, too, strongly recommended that the role of Special Envoy be continued, noting the key role Dobriansky had played in promoting the devolution of policing and justice. In particular, they cited the fact that Dobriansky encouraged Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams to work directly with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to work out a deal, rather than agreeing to serve as an intermediary (as Adams had initially requested). Ultimately, as pointed out by both Martin and Cowen, the fact that Sinn Fein and the DUP worked out a timetable for devolution without outside help was as important as the timetable itself. Dobriansky agreed, observing that this achievement was a notable point of pride between Northern Ireland First Secretary Peter Robinson and Deputy First Secretary Martin McGuinness during their brief meeting with President Bush in Washington in December 2008.

¶5. (C) Dobriansky also noted that, during their brief December meeting, President Bush invited both Robinson and McGuinness to participate in "Freedom Institute" initiatives on global conflict resolution, an item of particular interest to Foreign Minister Martin. Martin told Dobriansky, "If we

DUBLIN 00000017 002 OF 002

can be of assistance (in conflict resolution initiatives), feel free to call on us." Dobriansky shared that Gerry Adams had expressed to her interest in participating in USG initiatives aimed at reconciling the Palestinians and Israelis, particularly given the current crisis in Gaza - an offer she had passed along to the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau and President-Elect Obama's transition team.

Cuba

¶6. (C) Referring to Martin's upcoming plans to visit to Cuba, Dobriansky appealed to him to focus on human rights issues and to meet with civil society. She pointed out that, with Ireland's excellent international reputation as a promoter of human rights and democracy, such outreach would send a strong signal to Cuba and the rest of the world. Martin took her request on board.

¶7. (U) Under Secretary Dobriansky cleared this message.
FOLEY